

**WE CLAIM:**

1. A method of managing a leased electronic equipment, comprising the steps of:

5                 (a) during initial activation of the electronic equipment, allowing a lessee to input an encrypted authorization code associated with a lease contract for the electronic equipment between a lessor and the lessee, the authorization code containing a contract starting date and an equipment disable date associated with the  
10                 lease contract;

               (b) decrypting the authorization code inputted by the lessee according to a decryption algorithm;

15                 (c) enabling further operation of the electronic equipment when a current activation date of the electronic equipment is within an equipment enable period that starts from the contract starting date and that ends at the equipment disable date; and

20                 (d) disabling further operation of the electronic equipment when the current activation date is not within the equipment enable period.

2. The method as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising, between steps (b) and (c):

25                 (b-1) when decryption of the authorization code is not successful, repeating steps (a) and (b) until decryption of the authorization code inputted by the lessee is successful.

3. The method as claimed in Claim 2, wherein, in step

(b-1), further operation of the electronic equipment is disabled when decryption of the authorization code has yet to be successful after a predetermined number of tries.

5 4. The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the authorization code further contains a serial number of the electronic equipment.

10 5. The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the equipment enable period includes a contract period that starts from the contract starting date and that ends at a contract expiry date, and a grace period that starts from the contract expiry date and that ends at the equipment disable date.

15 6. The method as claimed in Claim 5, wherein the contract period includes a reminder period that starts from a reminder date and that ends at the contract expiry date, and wherein step (c) includes the sub-steps of:

20 (c-1) when the current activation date is within the contract period but not within the reminder period, enabling further operation of the electronic equipment;

(c-2) when the current activation date is within the reminder period, displaying a message to indicate that the lease contract is about to expire before enabling further operation of the electronic equipment;

25 (c-3) when the current activation date is within the grace period, allowing the lessee to input another encrypted authorization code for repeating steps (a)

and (b) so as to update the equipment disable date; and  
5 (c-4) when the current activation date is within the grace period, upon verifying that said another encrypted authorization code was not inputted, displaying a message to indicate that the lease contract has expired before enabling further operation of the electronic equipment.

7. The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein step (d) includes the sub-steps of:

10 (d-1) when the current activation date is not within the equipment enable period, allowing the lessee to input another encrypted authorization code for repeating steps (a) and (b) so as to update the equipment disable date; and

15 (d-2) when the current activation date is not within the equipment enable period, upon verifying that said another encrypted authorization code was not inputted, disabling further operation of the electronic equipment.

20 8. A system for managing a leased electronic equipment, comprising:

means for allowing a lessee to input an encrypted authorization code associated with a lease contract for the electronic equipment between a lessor and the lessee during initial activation of the electronic equipment, the authorization code containing a contract starting date and an equipment disable date associated with the

lease contract;

means for decrypting the authorization code inputted by the lessee according to a decryption algorithm;

means for enabling operation of the electronic equipment when a current activation date of the electronic equipment is within an equipment enable period that starts from the contract starting date and that ends at the equipment disable date; and

means for disabling further operation of the electronic equipment when the current activation date is not within the equipment enable period.

9. An equipment leasing method, comprising the steps of:

providing an electronic equipment for lease; and  
generating an encrypted authorization code associated with a lease contract for the electronic equipment between a lessor and a lessee, the authorization code containing a contract starting date and an equipment disable date, wherein the electronic equipment is enabled during an equipment enable period that starts from the contract starting date and that ends at the equipment disable date upon decryption by the electronic equipment of the authorization code inputted by the lessee.

25 10. The equipment leasing method as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the equipment enable period includes a contract period that starts from the contract starting

date and that ends at a contract expiry date, said equipment leasing method further comprising the step of:

5 sending an electronic message to the lessee when a current date is close to the contract expiry date to indicate that the lease contract is about to expire.

11. A system for managing an electronic equipment to be leased, comprising:

10 a database unit for storing information pertinent to a lease contract for the electronic equipment between a lessor and a lessee; and

15 a processor unit coupled electrically to said database unit and generating an encrypted authorization code associated with the lease contract, the authorization code containing a contract starting date and an equipment disable date, whereby operation of the electronic equipment is enabled during an equipment enable period that starts from the contract starting date and that ends at the equipment disable date upon 20 decryption by the electronic equipment of the authorization code inputted by the lessee.

25 12. The system as claimed in Claim 11, wherein the equipment enable period includes a contract period that starts from the contract starting date and that ends at a contract expiry date, said system further comprising a network link unit coupled electrically to said processor unit, said processor unit sending an

electronic message to the lessee via said network link unit when a current date is close to the contract expiry date to indicate that the lease contract is about to expire.